



Washington State Auditor's Office

Troy Kelley

Integrity • Respect • Independence

Whistleblower Investigation Report

South Puget Sound Community College

For the period July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014

Published December 31, 2014

Report No. 1013361





Washington State Auditor Troy Kelley

December 31, 2014

Dr. Timothy Stokes, President
South Puget Sound Community College

Report on Whistleblower Investigation

Attached is the official report on Whistleblower Case No. WB 14-037 at the South Puget Sound Community College.

The State Auditor's Office received an assertion of improper governmental activity at the College. This assertion was submitted to us under the provisions of Chapter 42.40 of the Revised Code of Washington, the Whistleblower Act. We have investigated the assertion independently and objectively through interviews and by reviewing relevant documents. This report contains the result of our investigation.

Questions about this report should be directed to Whistleblower Manager Jim Brownell at (360) 725-5352.

Sincerely,

TROY KELLEY
STATE AUDITOR
OLYMPIA, WA

cc: Ken Harden, Chief Human Resources Officer
Governor Jay Inslee
Kate Reynolds, Executive Director, Executive Ethics Board
Jacque Hawkins-Jones, Investigator

WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION REPORT

Assertion and results

Our office received a whistleblower complaint asserting a Director at South Puget Sound Community College (College) extended his spouse a special privilege when he assisted her in accessing information stored on the College's internal network. This access enabled her to secure a teaching contract with the College. It was also asserted the Director was responsible for the "handling" of his spouse's course evaluation.

We found no reasonable cause to believe an improper governmental action occurred.

About the Investigation

On June 24, 2013, an instructor at the College sent an email to the Dean of Social Sciences and Business regarding an emergency requiring him to leave the country. The instructor was scheduled to teach an online economics course beginning July 1, 2013. Because the Dean could not cancel the class on such short notice she asked another College instructor if he could teach the class.

The subject is responsible for the online teaching system and as such, granted access to the instructor to allow him to review the course work that had been prepared for the course. The instructor reviewed the course work and declined to teach it because he felt there was not sufficient time to develop additional course work.

When responding to the Dean's request to allow the instructor access to the course, the subject advised that his spouse was qualified to teach the course and may be available if needed. After the instructor declined the offer to teach, and due to the time constraints, the Dean asked the subject's spouse to apply for the position. The spouse was granted access to the course information so she could determine whether there was enough preparation done to allow her to instruct on such short notice. After reviewing the course work the subject's spouse determined that she was unable to use the information available, but would be able to structure the course work in the allotted time. The Dean found the subject's spouse to be qualified to teach and offered her a part-time contract.

Regarding the assertion that the subject was responsible for supervising his spouse's evaluations, we found the compilation of data from student evaluations is completed through a computer program and is outside the control of the subject.

We found no reasonable cause to believe a special privilege was extended to the subject's spouse. The College was placed in a position that did not allow for opening the temporary instruction position up to a larger pool of applicants.

State Auditor's Office Concluding Remarks

We thank College officials and personnel for their assistance and cooperation during the investigation.

WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION CRITERIA

We came to our determination in this investigation by evaluating the facts against the criteria below:

RCW 42.52.070: Special Privileges.

Except as required to perform duties within the scope of employment, no state officer or state employee may use his or her position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or herself, or his or her spouse, child, parents, or other persons.